

VZCZCXRO7325
PP RUEHGR
DE RUEHSP #0289 1831317
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 011317Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9256
INFO RHMCSUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS PORT OF SPAIN 000289

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA/CAR, WHA/EPSC
PASS USTR FOR AUSTR EISSENSTAT, K.SHIGETOMI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [EPET](#) [ECIN](#) [ENRG](#) [TD](#)

SUBJECT: PM MANNING MEETS WITH U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: During U.S. Chamber of Commerce President Tom Donohue's June 26 courtesy call on Prime Minister Patrick Manner, the PM opined that the Caribbean was neglected by Washington. Highlighting the important role Trinidad plays in U.S. energy security, Manning lamented that the U.S. had not stepped up to the plate on security cooperation. He also reiterated an interest in securing duty free access to U.S. markets for packaged goods, iron, and aluminum. Donohue asked the PM to elaborate on concerns about Trinidad's relations with the U.S. at a later date and indicated his willingness to follow up the PM's concerns in Washington.

END SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) In Port of Spain to speak at the Association of American Chambers of Commerce in Latin America (AACCLA) conference, Tom Donahue, President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, together with Adrean Rothkopf, John Murphy, Jim Robinson, and Scott Eisner of the Chamber, Raymond Gatcliffe, President of the American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago, and EconOff, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Patrick Manning on July 26. Donahue recapped his AACCLA speech for the Prime Minister in which he emphasized the substantial increase in trade in the region and encouraged the nations of the Americas to reject protectionism and collaborate to improve the region's competitive position.

¶3. (SBU) Latching onto the theme of collaboration, the Prime Minister lamented the alleged lack of U.S. support for the Caribbean. Manning stated bluntly "the U.S. has not treated the Caribbean well." He noted that T&T supplies the U.S. with significant amounts of LNG (as well as methanol and ammonia) and thereby plays a critical role in U.S. energy security. Despite its strategic importance, Trinidad has not received sufficient support from the U.S. on security matters. Using the war on drugs as an example, Manning said his nation has to "fight" to secure U.S. assistance to address a problem stemming from North American demand.

¶4. (SBU) Turning to energy infrastructure security, the PM acknowledged Trinidad's vulnerability to an attack. He then highlighted the implications of disruptions in local LNG production for U.S. energy security and suggested that we were not doing enough to protect a vital supplier. Given the significant volume of LNG produced on a daily basis in Trinidad for the U.S. market, Manning asserted that an attack on T&T's facilities would severely disrupt operations along the U.S. eastern seaboard and spike natural gas prices. Again emphasizing T&T's importance to U.S. energy security, the PM stated "if the U.S. does not appreciate" Trinidad, "we will move away" and explore new markets, such as Mexico and Brazil. He asserted that T&T can secure better terms in other markets.

¶5. (SBU) On trade preferences, the Prime Minister noted the Caribbean has "needs," one of which is duty free access for iron, aluminum, petrochemicals, and most importantly goods packaged in the

region. Given the small size of the Caribbean market, granting the region duty free access would have little impact on U.S. markets but would be of significant benefit to the 5 million people living in the region.

¶16. (SBU) Donahue thanked the Prime Minister for T&T's commitment to U.S. energy security and expressed concern about his comments on U.S.-Caribbean relations. Donahue told the PM that he intends to take a close look at the issues raised and asked him to provide specifics at a later date. He further noted that security, in all respects, is only strengthened when there is collaboration. Donahue suggested that the U.S. must maintain good relations with its current energy suppliers, while looking for new resources in the Outer Continental Shelf and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Finally, Donahue invited the PM to visit the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington to meet with key business leaders.

¶17. (SBU) COMMENT: This is not the first time the Prime Minister has expressed dissatisfaction with U.S. engagement in the region, though at other moments he has been more upbeat. Trinidad considers itself a good friend of the U.S., but more than occasionally gives the impression it feels neglected. Continuing engagement, including pointing out our myriad ties and pressing T&T to live up to its somewhat-inflated self-image as a close ally, will be valuable to counter that trend. Such engagement can be bilateral, including on the energy front, but also multilateral in areas such as regional security and preparing for the Summit of the Americas. END COMMENT.

AUSTIN